

23rd July 2021 – Trade Update

Use of face coverings in hackney carriage and private hire vehicles

The Department for Transport (DfT) has provided further advice and guidance to hackney carriage and private hire drivers following the changes to rules on face coverings and social distancing to reflect Step 4 of the roadmap out of lockdown which came into effect on 19th July 2021. Drivers and operators are advised to familiarise themselves with the content of this guidance. The revised guidance can be found at [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): taxis and PHVs](#).

Whilst the legal requirement to wear face coverings has been lifted, the Government and Shropshire Council expect and recommend that people wear face coverings in crowded areas such as public transport, including taxis and private hire vehicles. Hackney carriage drivers and private hire operators should make themselves aware of the rules that could impact cross-border services and make every reasonable effort to inform passengers accordingly.

Private hire operators are strongly encouraged to consider the impact drivers being required to self-isolate may have on their business and ensure appropriate business continuity arrangements are in place and are effective. Private hire operators are strongly encouraged to ensure that when bookings are received, the hirer is notified of any requirement for passengers to wear face coverings. In addition, operators are encouraged to advertise the requirement to wear coverings through their websites and social media channels. The following COVID guidance page has been updated for passengers using hackney carriage and private hire vehicles [Coronavirus \(COVID-19\): safer travel guidance for passengers](#) and you may wish to include links to this page on your websites, social media channels, etc.

Drivers and operators are reminded that there are health, age, disability and other reasons why someone may not be able to wear a face covering. It is crucial that drivers and operators are aware of these to ensure that everyone can have confidence in using public transport. In addition, drivers and operators are reminded that passengers with a cough could be asthmatic or have another health issue, e.g. common cold and allergies, both of which can cause a persistent cough; as a result, very careful consideration must be given before refusing to transport a passenger.

You are reminded that Public Health advice is that taxi and private hire vehicle drivers wear a face covering when they are unable to maintain social distancing in passenger facing roles; however, it is recognised that there will be exceptional circumstances when a driver cannot wear a face covering, or when their task makes it sensible (based on a risk assessment) for them not to wear a face covering.

The Council's Director of Public Health has advised that COVID-19 rates are currently high in Shropshire, and across the UK, and the number of positive cases are increasing every day. As a result, the restrictions that have been lifted by the Government do not come without risk. The Director of Public Health confirms that face coverings are a key measure to minimise the transmission of COVID-19 and strongly recommends people continue to wear them to protect themselves and others, particularly in enclosed or crowded spaces or where ventilation is poor, and, for this reason, the advice does apply to taxi and private hire drivers.